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Monday, 25 September 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, who is joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Jerusalem.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: Today I devote my regular briefing to the Security Council to reporting, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) during the period from 20 June to 20 September. In this third briefing, I will once again focus on developments on the ground in accordance with the provisions of the resolution, including on regional and international efforts to advance the peace process.

During the reporting period, Israel did not cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, or fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard, as called for by the resolution. Since 20 June, Israel's illegal settlement activities have continued at a high rate — a consistent pattern over the course of this year. Activity during this period was concentrated primarily in occupied East Jerusalem, where plans were advanced for over 2,300 housing units in July, 30 per cent more than for the whole of 2016. That includes plans for some 1,600 units expanding a ring of settlements north of East Jerusalem, as well as in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, adjacent to the Old City. While no plans were advanced in Area C during the reporting period, in early September construction resumed on the new settlement of Amihai, in the heart of the West Bank.

The reporting period witnessed the eviction of a Palestinian family in Sheikh Jarrah, residents for over 50 years, after a protracted legal battle. The building is located in a section of the neighbourhood in which several settlement plans were among those promoted in July. Eviction proceedings are under way for some 180 Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, over 60 of whom reside in Sheikh Jarrah.

Meanwhile, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the destruction of Palestinian-owned property across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued, albeit at a significantly lower rate. Overall since the beginning of 2017, 344 structures have been demolished, a third of them in East Jerusalem, displacing some 500 people. In Area C of the occupied West Bank in August, three educational facilities, serving 175 children, were demolished or confiscated, citing the lack of building permits, which are virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain.

On 25 July, in the city of Hebron, 15 Israeli settler families illegally occupied the Abu Rajab/Machpelah House, despite ongoing legal proceedings over its ownership. On 27 August, the Israeli Government notified the High Court of Justice that it would evict the settlers within one week. However, that process has been put on hold by a temporary injunction issued by the Court.

In other related developments, on 26 July an amendment to the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel passed a first reading in the Knesset. If approved, the law would further cement Israeli control over East Jerusalem. On 17 August, the High Court of Justice issued a temporary injunction formally postponing the application of the so-called regularization law. On 31 August, a military order was issued establishing a civil services administration that upgrades the status of settlements in the H2 area of Hebron, further consolidating Israeli presence there and reinforcing the existing separation and division in this highly volatile area, where some 500 Israelis live among some 40,000 Palestinians. The United Nations considers all settlement activities to be illegal under international law and an impediment to peace. Resolution 2334 (2016) states that the international community will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties themselves through negotiations.

I will now turn to the issue of violence, which persists as one of the main obstacles to resolving the

conflict. Resolution 2334 (2016) calls on all sides to prevent such acts and to strengthen efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination. Although the reporting period was characterized by relatively low levels of fatalities, a number of incidents occurred, particularly related to the unrest following the fatal 14 July attack against two Israeli policemen in Jerusalem's Old City.

During the reporting period, 19 Palestinians, five of whom were in Area A of the West Bank, were killed in attacks, clashes and Israeli military operations. Eight Israelis were killed in clashes and attacks, including the three Israeli-Arab perpetrators of the 14 July attack, who were killed by the security forces. Of the 19 Palestinian fatalities, five were killed during protests and subsequent clashes related to the unrest in Jerusalem. On 21 July, a Palestinian brutally murdered three members of an Israeli family in a terrorist attack in the West Bank settlement of Halamish.

In a reaction to the events at the Holy Esplanade, on 21 July Palestinian President Abbas declared a freeze of all contacts with Israel at all levels, including security coordination. After three months of quiet, on 26 June, 23 and 24 July and 8 August Palestinian militants fired rockets towards Israel, with no injuries reported. In response, the Israel Defense Forces conducted five airstrikes in Gaza, resulting in three Palestinians being injured. On 17 August, one Palestinian was killed by a suicide bomber, who was also killed, close to the Egyptian border in Gaza. This appears to have been the first suicide bombing affecting Hamas forces in Gaza.

During the reporting period, settler-related violence also continued. Some 26 incidents were documented, the majority involving the vandalization of Palestinian agricultural property around Nablus, and assaults against Palestinians in and around Hebron. Meanwhile, at least 26 Palestinian attacks also took place against Israeli settlers, resulting in casualties or property damage. Punitive demolitions also continued during the reporting period, with Israeli authorities demolishing five homes belonging to families of Palestinian perpetrators of attacks.

The reporting period also witnessed a shrinking space for civil society and freedom of expression. On 24 June, the Palestinian President issued, by decree, the Cybercrime Law. Since then, at least six journalists, one human rights activist in Hebron and a number of others have reportedly been arrested. While most were subsequently released, these arrests raise strong concerns that the law is being used to curtail freedom of expression. In Gaza, a social media activist was arrested by Hamas on 3 July and detained for almost two weeks on charges of incitement against the de facto authorities, while a journalist was detained for more than two months on unclear allegations of collaboration with the authorities in Ramallah.

Resolution 2334 (2016) called upon both parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, and to condemn all acts of terrorism. At the height of the July crisis around the holy sites of Jerusalem, officials and representatives on all sides employed provocative rhetoric. In the midst of what were largely peaceful protests, Hamas and senior Palestinian Authority officials called for an escalation and a day of rage across the occupied Palestinian territory. Hamas and others continued to openly glorify terror attacks, describing the murder of three Israelis at their home in Halamish as "heroic". Meanwhile, President Abbas explicitly condemned the 14 July attack and, in an attempt to calm tensions at the holy sites, some Palestinian leaders and religious authorities on both sides called on protestors to avoid violence and provocation.

With regard to settlements, Israeli officials continued to use provocative rhetoric in support of expansion. On 3 August, the Israeli Prime Minister delivered an inauguration speech at the launch of the construction of 1,000 new housing units in the Beitar Illit settlement, in which he praised the achievements of his Government in promoting settlement construction. On 28 August, he said that

> "there will be no more uprooting of settlements in the land of Israel ... . We will deepen our roots, build, strengthen and settle".

Other senior Israeli politicians also made repeated calls for annexation of the West Bank, with one Member of the Knesset expressing his desire to "destroy" hopes for Palestinian statehood, and stating that "there is room to define and realize the national aspirations of one people only — the Jewish people".

Resolution 2334 (2016) reiterated the call of the Middle East Quartet on both parties to take steps to reverse negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution. On 10 July, an interim power-purchasing agreement was signed between the Palestinian and the Israeli electricity

companies, energizing the first Palestinian-owned and operated sub-station in Jenin and allowing for an increase in electricity supply in the northern West Bank. On 13 July, the United States facilitated an agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, allowing for an increase in water supply for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the 2013 Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance project.

In Gaza, the situation remains extremely fragile. The chronic energy deficit has been substantially worsened by the decision of the Palestinian Authority to reduce electricity supply to the Strip. While Egyptian fuel has enabled the Gaza power plant to resume operations, electricity supply is still down to about four hours per day. Basic services in some 190 health, water and sanitation facilities continue to rely on back-up generators powered by United Nations-provided fuel. As part of the Gaza emergency appeal issued in July, an additional $4 million from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund has been released to support critical services. The appeal is now 51 per cent funded.

To end the standoff, the Palestinian Authority has remained firm in its demands for Hamas to dissolve the administrative committee it established in March and allow the Government of National Consensus to take up its responsibilities in Gaza. On 17 September, Hamas officially accepted these conditions. It now remains to be seen whether the agreement will be implemented and electricity supply to Gaza restored.

I have just returned from a trip to the Gaza Strip, and I am happy to brief the Security Council in closed session on developments related to Palestinian reconciliation and the Government returning to Gaza.

During the reporting period, there were no developments related to Member States' distinguishing, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories it occupied in 1967. Meanwhile, the international community has continued its efforts to advance the goal of peace. The envoys of the Middle East Quartet continue to meet to discuss current efforts to advance peace, as well as the deteriorating situation in Gaza. In August, a United States delegation travelled to the region and met with regional interlocutors, with a focus on reviving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. All parties agreed to continue working towards a sustainable peace and to promote security and stability across the region.

Shortly thereafter, on 27 August the Secretary-General arrived in the region for his first official visit to Israel and Palestine. He strongly reaffirmed the United Nations position that there is no alternative to the two-State solution and suggested a three-track approach to end the occupation and advance the prospects for peace: first, a serious political process with a clear end goal of two States living side by side in peace and mutual recognition; secondly, a simultaneous effort to improve the socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians; and thirdly, active engagement with regional partners. He conveyed his personal commitment to helping the parties return to meaningful negotiations, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and prior agreements.

In September, Egypt hosted delegations from Hamas and Fatah in an effort to advance Palestinian unity, which led to the breakthrough decision by the de facto Gaza leadership to dissolve the administrative committee and invite the Government to return to the Strip.

On 18 September, Norway convened the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Coordination of International Assistance to Palestinians in New York with Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ziad Abu Amr; Palestinian Authority Minister of Finance and Planning, Mr. Shukri Bishara; and Israeli Minister of Regional Cooperation, Mr. Tzachi Hanegbi, in attendance. Those at the meeting agreed that additional concerted action was needed to make progress on fiscal sustainability, economic development and Gaza's reconstruction and recovery. It was also noted that socioeconomic conditions cannot be adequately addressed without progress in the peace process.

In conclusion, I would like to share some broad observations on the reporting period.

Continuing settlement expansion, most notably during this period in occupied East Jerusalem, is making the two-State solution increasingly unattainable and undermining Palestinian belief in international peace efforts. In addition to illegal settlements, the practice of demolishing Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and displacing Palestinians undermines the prospects of peace. Continued violence against civilians and incitement perpetuate mutual fear and suspicion, while impeding any effort to bridge the gaps between the two sides. I once again urge both parties to demonstrate their

commitment to rejecting violence, inflammatory rhetoric and provocative actions.

The Jenin agreement was an important first step towards a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian power-purchasing agreement that would lead to greater Palestinian energy autonomy. I encourage the parties to fully implement the Red Sea-Dead Sea agreement to enable the delivery of much-needed water to the West Bank and Gaza.

While all initiatives to improve the Palestinian economy are welcome, much more needs to be done as part of a political process aimed at establishing a Palestinian State. Economic development, as critical as it is, is no substitute for sovereignty and statehood. As the Secretary-General has called for, efforts aimed at achieving both sovereignty and statehood must proceed in parallel.

Intra-Palestinian reconciliation remains critical to preventing the continuing militant buildup and restoring hope for the future. In that regard, I welcome the recent statement by Hamas announcing the dissolution of the administrative committee in Gaza and agreement to allow the Government of National Consensus to assume its responsibilities in Gaza.

I commend the Egyptian authorities for their tireless efforts in creating such positive momentum. All parties must seize the opportunity to restore unity and open a new page for the Palestinian people. That should facilitate the removal of Israeli closures on Gaza, in line with resolution 1860 (2009). The United Nations stands ready to assist all efforts in that respect. It is critical that the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, most notably the crippling electricity crisis, be addressed as a priority.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that collective and determined action on the part of the parties, the region and the international community is needed in order to initiate a serious political process, drawing upon all relevant United Nations resolutions, that will realize a two-State solution and end the occupation and resolve all final status issues. As the Secretary-General said on his recent visit,

> "the international community cannot simply turn away and allow the situation to deteriorate. We have a role and a responsibility to support the parties in resolving this conflict".

With that responsibility comes an obligation to do what is necessary in order to establish a peaceful, prosperous and secure future for Palestinians, Israelis and the entire region.

The President: I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, for his informative briefing, and to reiterate once again the total support of Uruguay for his work.

Uruguay appreciates the submission of the third report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016). We reiterate our interest in ensuring that such reports, like all other reports submitted to the Security Council on the topics that form part of our work's agenda, be circulated in writing before meetings in a manner that enables members to analyse and comment more in detail on their content.

We are concerned at the lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has humanitarian, political and security implications in both countries and the region as a whole. In the nine months since the adoption of resolution 2334 (2016), little progress has been made in its implementation, with announcements by Israel of expanding construction of settlements in the occupied territories. We reiterate that settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a serious obstacle to peace and the two-State solution.

August will also be remembered, unfortunately, by 100 children and their families as a time when three schools in the West Bank were demolished or damaged by the Israeli authorities on the orders of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. The Jubbet al-Dhib school, which lies east of Bethlehem and which was paid for by the European Union and completed three weeks earlier, was demolished on the same day that school began. A kindergarten in the Bedouin community of Jabal Al-Baba was also demolished and a primary school room in Abu al-Nawar lost its only source of electricity, solar panels. Such actions clearly do not contribute to de-escalation. Additional measures are necessary.

Until a few days ago, the parties had taken no steps to reverse the trends threatening the two-State

solution, according to the latest report of the Middle East Quartet. In that context, we appreciate the announcement made last week by Hamas, offering the Palestinian Authority the resumption of control of the Gaza Strip after a decade. The tragic and worrisome situation of the 2 million inhabitants of Gaza, who are permanently on the verge of a serious humanitarian crisis, constitutes a serious threat to peace and carries the risk of provoking another armed conflict.

The reunification of Palestine under a single, legitimate and democratic Government is essential in order to address the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Such reunification could substantially improve living conditions in that area. If that agreement is to be successfully implemented, it will be essential that measures be accompanied by agreements on security, the disarmament of Hamas and the renunciation of both violence and the destruction of Israel as a declared objective.

On every occasion that the Security Council has met to consider the Palestinian question, we have insisted on the need to abandon the rhetoric of hatred and incitement. Peace will come through negotiations we reiterate that getting on the path of negotiation will come through gestures. In addition to moving away from hatred, we must humanize relations between the two contenders. Additionally, dead enemies on both sides must be returned. For example, the families of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul have been waiting since 2014 to be able to give them a dignified burial.

As Secretary-General Guterres expressed during his recent visit to the region, Uruguay understands that there are no alternatives to the two-State solution. Uruguay maintains its strong support for the establishment of two independent States and the right of Israel and Palestine to live in peace within secure and recognized borders and within a renewed field of cooperation that is free from any threats or acts that breach peace, including acts of terrorism. Agreements must be reached with respect to Jerusalem and other issues, such as equitable access to drinking water and respect for sacred sites.

It is time to reinvigorate a political outlook that will bring the parties back to the negotiating table, which is a process that must be supported by economic and social measures that will improve the living conditions and development of the Palestinian people. To that end, it will be necessary for the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to make every effort to avoid unnecessary provocations that would increase tensions and violence, which hamper all the efforts of the international community to bring about the resumption of bilateral negotiations.

In conclusion, as we have been doing since 1947, we wish to reiterate Uruguay's unwavering commitment to peace in the Middle East. In order to achieve this long-sought-after goal, the parties need to resume direct bilateral negotiations with a view to achieving a two-State solution, which is the only option that will allow for the peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine, an end to the long and illegal occupation, and the well-being and security of their peoples.

We are just two months from the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which established the partition of Palestine and the creation of two States, one Arab and one Jewish. This solution was decisively supported by Uruguay, out of the conviction that it would make it possible for Israel and Palestine to live together in peace and with secure borders. Yet despite constant efforts, this process unfortunately remains unfinished. The international community continues to hope that the leaders of Israel and Palestine will take every measure to move this process forward towards a genuine and lasting peace.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Ethiopian presidency for convening today's briefing.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia, as a pacifist country, believes that the only way to guarantee a just and lasting peace in the conflict between Israel and Palestine is through sincere dialogue and clear expressions of political will on both sides with a view to achieving the two-State solution. Based on that conviction, we reaffirm our full commitment to multilateralism and a debate on a level playing field in the framework of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

The present context requires that we, from the seats that we occupy, put an immediate halt to the expansionist policy of Israel, which insists on continuing to move its inhabitants into Palestinian territory, in clear violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and resolution 2334 (2016). It continues to reject the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 2004 on the

construction of walls in occupied territories. It refuses to recognize that Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory have been established in breach of international law, as concluded by the International Court of Justice.

On 22 November 1967, resolution 242 (1967) was adopted precisely as a result of Israel's cruel occupation of Palestinian territories. The resolution refers to the fact that one of the fundamental principles for achieving peace in the Middle East is the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from the territories they had occupied during that conflict. To date, this resolution has still not been implemented.

The humanitarian situation continues to unravel due to the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip. In order to maintain a minimal level of emergency service, generators that are at constant risk of fuel shortages or excessive use are relied upon, and spare parts and replacement generators cannot be obtained because of restrictions. We hope that this dire situation will come to an end immediately and that the Palestinian civilian population that inhabits these territories will have access to more humane living conditions. We again urge the Security Council to enforce the demand that Israel, the Power occupying the Gaza Strip, immediately and completely halt its illegal blockade of the territory, which is a collective punishment of the civilian population of Palestine, through, inter alia, the immediate, ongoing and unconditional opening of border crossings in order for humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to move in and out of the Gaza Strip.

As we have said on previous occasions, we request that the Secretary-General's quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) be presented in written format, which will allow us to analyse the resolution's implementation in detail, and that it include updated maps of all settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. Bolivia wishes to express its commitment to the rapid implementation of the resolution without further delay, and we encourage all members of the Security Council to join forces to make this happen right away. We believe that all the resolutions of the Council should be implemented with the same rigour and commitment that they require, with the sole objective of guaranteeing international peace and security.

In conclusion, Bolivia reaffirms its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people and its right to a free, sovereign and independent State within the pre-1967 international borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We wish to express our appreciation to Special Coordinator Mladenov for his comprehensive and objective update.

On the political track, we have already expressed our position on the expansion-of-settlements issue several times before, and our generic position remains unchanged, balanced and consistent, so I will not take the Security Council's time to voice it again. I would just add that the principle of two States for two peoples is generally accepted by both Israel and Palestine, along with the entire international community, and should be taken into account as one of the foundations for establishing a lasting peace in the Middle East. We call on the parties to refrain from taking any steps that could impede the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. By saying the foregoing, we stand for the taking of concrete steps that will preserve the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the two States and strengthen the prospects for peace based on the inalienable right of Palestinians to Statehood and Israel's right to security. We propose to start from encouraging confidence-building measures between the parties consistent with the United Nations pillar related to development.

On the other hand, Kazakhstan welcomes the United States diplomatic efforts aimed at resuming the peace process and United States President Trump's talks with the leaders of both countries at the time of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We call on the Middle East Quartet to revive its work on the Palestine-Israel track in the context of the American side's efforts in that direction. We also welcome the Russian Federation's and Egypt's efforts to ensure intra-Palestinian consolidation and urge all Palestinian political parties and movements to integrate into one national political structure.

On the humanitarian track, we continue to observe the difficult situation in the Gaza Strip, which we believe contributes to the instability and frustration that can fuel conflict and terrorist activities. In this regard, we urge the official authorities of both Israel

and Palestine to help resolve the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Finally, in the interest of peace in this long-suffering region, we shall collect and synthesize the best we can find. We should undertake a collective search for the best way to meet the contemporary challenges facing this part of the globe.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.